

OTTOMAN STUDIES IN GREECE

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This paper is preliminary in character. The strictures of time and the epistemological nature of the subject limit me to but a brief presentation of some basic points. I hope to return with a more extensive study on the history of Ottoman Studies in Greece¹, from their inception to the present day, examining in detail the inertia and delays that have existed and the reasons for these. Such a study should, of course, be accompanied by a bibliography of works relating to Ottoman Studies, by Greek scholars.

I begin my discussion of the subject by clarifying the content of the term "Ottoman Studies". In my opinion Ottoman Studies subsume on the one hand the institution of organized courses or studies in universities and the work produced by specialist Ottomanists in research foundations, and on the other, the production of works concerning the Ottoman period of Greek history. So, my exposition will revolve around these two poles, which in Greece at least do not necessarily coincide, but both together comprise the discipline known there as Ottoman Studies. The one-sided presentation of them would be erroneous and the picture given misleading.

Ottoman Studies have only recently been included in the Greek educational system. Over the past decades, in several universities, Ottomanists have been teaching Ottoman history, or more correctly, the history of the Greek nation during the Ottoman period, within the departments of Modern Greek History. Only in 1980, was a department of Ottoman Studies set up in the newly-founded University of Crete.

Why were there no specialist departments of or courses on Ottoman Studies, and Oriental Studies in general, in the Greek higher education system? I believe the reasons are linked directly with the historiographical horizon formed in the fledgeling Greek state. This was defined by an education that turned its interest

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¹ Earlier contributions on the same issue: E. Rossi, "Gli studi orientalistici in Grecia", *Oriente Moderno* 21 (1941), p. 538-547. P. Chidiroglou, "Greco-Turkish II (On the need for the cultivation of Turkish Studies in Greece)" (in Greek), *Mnemosyne* 2 (1968-69), p. 303-308; I. G. Yannopoulos, "The development of Turkish Studies and the need to cultivate these in Greece" (in Greek), *Mnemon* 1 (1971), p. 5-22; I. Theocharidis, "The development of Turkish Studies in Greece" (in Greek), *Dodone* 17/1 (1988), p. 19-60.

towards ancient Hellenic civilization, and from the moment this choice was made, the distancing from the recent past became ever more decisive. I think that it would be extremely simplistic to consider it an aversion or to attribute the reasons for this turn to the traumatic experience of life in bondage that the Greek War of Independence in 1821 and the founding of the Modern Greek state stopped temporarily, until the national fulfilment that came almost one century later, in 1930. In my opinion, the contemporary theories of Fallmerayer on Greco-Slavs, for which generations of scholars have been consumed in the study of medieval Hellenism, contributed equally to this choice. Another contributory factor was the fact that, of all the Balkan peoples, the Greeks had the oldest historical past, which was promoted of necessity in times when they had to assert their identity as a nation and a state in the Balkans, and indeed in periods when the creation of the new nation-states led the ethnic groups of the Balkans into competition and direct conflict.

In the educational system the historiographical line of Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos was adopted, as defined in his opus vitae, *A History of the Greek Nation*. A contemporary of his at the University of Athens was Pavlos Karolidis, from Cappadocia, an orientalist, who knew not only Turkish but several other Oriental languages. But the viewpoint of the Karamanli Karolidis was alien to the ideological inquiries of mid-19th-century Greece. Paparrigopoulos was very much a man of his day and he served its purpose well. His influence lasted a long time, until the restoration of democracy, after the fall of the Junta, in the 1970s, with some luminous exceptions of course, which, as always, prove the rule.

It should be noted that this retardation also applies to very important periods of Greek history, such as for example Byzantine times and the period of Latin rule. Organized university departments and research centres for Medieval Hellenism were late in coming and only established in the middle years of the 20th century. Consequently, the delay in the sector of Ottoman Studies follows this more general trend. Another reason why Ottoman Studies were far from the priorities of scholarship was the volume and wealth of the Greek sources themselves for this period. It is obvious that the 'home products' are studied first and then the others. I assure you that even today the amount of unpublished and unstudied Greek sources for the Byzantine and the Ottoman period is enormous.

No research centres for Ottoman Studies, like those in the other Balkan countries, were established in Greece. And if I may be permitted to make a parenthesis: I am most curious to learn what is the "Atina'daki Osmanlı Araştırmaları Enstitüsü", to which the journalist Taha Akyol refers in the newspaper *Milliyet* (11.9.99). To return, however, to the subject in hand, the backwardness does not just concern Ottoman Studies; it concerns the development of scholarship and research as a whole in Greece. Nevertheless, within this climate the

Institute of Balkan Studies was established in the 1960s. Its aim was to study the Slav peoples of the Balkan Peninsula, and the Turkish language was included in the curriculum of its school.

In my opinion no corresponding centre of Ottoman Studies or Turcology was created in Greece because, first of all, there was no political goal. As historians we know, better than anyone else, I think, that organized studies have a political aim and are, to a considerable degree, instruments of propaganda of a Ministry of Foreign Affairs or a Ministry of Defence. In countries where Ottoman Studies have developed, the political interest preceded the purely scientific. Diplomats were the first Ottomanists. Examples abound in each country, from past to present. The recent Greek-Turkish rivalry in universities in the USA is telling in this respect.

With this awareness, it is interesting to examine why there was no political incentive in Greece to create a research centre for Ottoman and Turcological Studies. It is clear that after the Second World War and the painful Civil War that followed, the foreign policy of Greece focused on her northern neighbours. Greece and Turkey became members of the same alliance, NATO, while the other Balkan countries joined the rival camp. In my view this counter-alignment defined Greek foreign policy in the Balkans until the time when the relationship of alliance between Greece and Turkey was disrupted by the Cyprus Question.

In addition to the above reasons, however, which are the obvious ones, I should mention some others, which I believe were perhaps more substantial as far as the non-creation of research centres and the non-existence of Ottoman and Turcological Studies in Greece are concerned, whereas these appeared from quite early on in the other Balkan states. The principal reason is that in whatever hostilities there were between Greece and Turkey throughout the 19th century, there was always migration of the minority populations. The Treaty of Lausanne, with the exchange of populations between the two countries, finally cleared the landscape, leaving a numerically small Muslim/Turkish population in Western Thrace, which is in no way comparable to the corresponding one in Bulgaria or in the former Yugoslavia. In these countries, with a Socialist, centralizing state, it was logical to establish centres for research on the minority Turkish populations, with all that this might entail². In other words, by and large enlisted research which quite often tampered with scientific results. One of the many examples that could be cited is the famous islamizatsia of the Bulgarian production, in which there is ideological abuse of the phenomenon of Islamization in order to explain the

² Recent important contributions to the Bulgarian and the Romanian historiography of the Ottoman period, which describe the change in the approach to Ottoman history that has taken place in these two countries since the collapse of Socialism: Maria Todorova, "Bulgarian Historical Writing on the Ottoman Empire", *New Perspectives on Turkey* 12 (Spring 1995), p. 97-118 and M. Miroiu, "Changing Attitudes Towards the Ottoman Historiography", *op.cit.*, p. 119-128.

existence of the Muslims in Bulgaria. Heaven forbid that in saying this I should be misconstrued as wishing to reduce to the same level the contribution of these Balkan Research Centres to Ottoman Studies. This would be untrue and unjust for the contribution of the institutions themselves, and even moreso for the scholars who worked in them.

Greece may have entered the field of Ottoman Studies late, but surely no one can doubt that it entered only with scientific desiderata. Essentially, Ottoman Studies appeared in Greece in the 1960s, not because the state created the preconditions for some short-term or long-term projects, but because the inevitable pressures of scholarship stimulated some persons to specialize in Turcology for the needs of the National Foundation for Scientific Research and the Historical Archive of Macedonia, a large Ottoman archive in Thessaloniki. In the late 1960s Elizabeth Zachariadou, Vassilis Dimitriadis and Pavlos Chidioglou published their first works, the quality of which is eloquent testimony to the difference between the work of a specialist and a non-specialist scholar. To the above founders of Ottoman Studies in the strict sense of the term, we add John Alexander and John Theocharidis, who presented work of analogous content.

I spoke a just-now about the difference between the work of the specialist and the non-specialist scholar. I refer to translations of sources that were published after 1930 and mainly after the Second World War, by erudite Greeks from Asia Minor and Constantinople, who spoke the Ottoman language. They continued essentially the work of Greek men of letters in the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century. The majority refugees, they are the same people as served the translation needs of the Greek state for many years. From among their circle was the group employed by I. Vasdravellis to translate the *sicil defterleri* of Karaferya (Verroia) and of Thessaloniki. The Smyrniot, Nikolaos Stavrinidis, a civil servant in the translation bureau of the Ministry of Justice in Crete, has bequeathed us a splendid five volume oeuvre with translations of the manuscript documents of the *kadı* of Candia (Herakleion). Much of Greek historiography is based on the fundamental work of these pioneers of Ottoman Studies in Greece, using in parallel Greek and foreign (mainly Western) sources from the Ottoman period of Greek history.

It would, I believe, be a dreadful mistake for us to regard Ottoman Studies as confined to knowledge of the Turkish Ottoman language and of all the technical knowledge surrounding this, of palaeography, diplomacy etc. At the beginning of my presentation, when I spoke of the content of the term "Ottoman Studies", I distinguished two categories. In the second I classed the production of studies on the Ottoman period of Greek history. This is a rich production, of excellent quality in recent decades, in which, through consulting published Greek, Western and Ottoman sources, new themes are studied or old ones approached by applying new methods and inquiries generated by the development and progress of historical

discipline in recent years. The works by Michalis Sakellariou on the Peloponnese in the second period of Ottoman rule, by Nikolaos Svoronos on trade in 18th-century Thessaloniki, by Spyros Vryonis on Hellenism in Asia Minor, the research by Spyros Asdrachas and others, have opened up new horizons for Ottoman Studies in Greece. For some sectors, such as the functioning of the communities, the processing of registers of various communities in the Ottoman period has given remarkable results, shedding light on the operation of this institution and its relations with the Ottoman authorities. Some may counter-argue that if the Ottoman source of an official chancellery is not used, then the product should not be included among Ottoman Studies. To which I hasten with the rejoinder that the study and processing of a Greek register kept by the council of elders (*demogerontes*) for its own needs, constitutes a mirror of the official Ottoman register and is very often a more fruitful source for illuminating issues such as the taxation potential of the population or the distribution of tax within the communities.

In the past decade, post-graduate lectures and seminars have been given on Ottoman subjects in some universities, the National Foundation for Scientific Research (Athens) and the Mediterranean Studies Foundation (Rethymno), and post-graduate dissertations and doctoral theses have been prepared. Concurrently, young scholars continue to study and be trained, as always, in foundations abroad. So, as the 20th century draws to a close, alongside the handful of second generation Ottomanists, and with the active presence of the trailblazers of the first, a group of young scholars is taking shape. Motivated by personal interests, they are endeavouring to acquire the profile of the Ottomanist. After all, any advances in Ottoman Studies in Greece, so far, are due to the fervent interest and ongoing struggles of a few individuals. The efforts of the researchers in the Centre for Asia Minor Studies and the Ottoman Archive of Thessaloniki, who are cataloguing archival material and producing knowledge, are a case in point.

The population and economy of various Greek regions, from the sources of the Ottoman registers; the topography and history of towns during the Ottoman period; the issue of *kanunnames* concerning the Greek lands; the regime of the Orthodox Church and the Patriarchate of Constantinople; the international symposia and conference proceedings published by the department of Turcological Studies in the University of Crete; the compiling of a bibliography of *Karamanlidika* printed texts: these are just some of the the recent output of Ottoman Studies in Greece.

The ball is now rolling, the scientific needs are pressing and precious time could be gained by both Greece and Turkey if there were collaboration in an institutional framework between the two countries, which would support educational or research programmes of common scientific interest and exchanges

of scholars. The profit will be great for both sides, as I have argued many times, and as has been demonstrated in the very few instances where the opportunity has arisen.

Always from the standpoint of Ottoman Studies, allow me, please, to ask a few questions. Without the help of Greek Studies, could the institution of the *Rum milleti* ever be studied, could the Greek archival material in the Ottoman and other archives of Turkey ever be catalogued? And last, does involvement with the Rum communities in the Ottoman period come under the discipline of Greek Studies or Ottoman Studies?

Dear colleagues, the testimonies of sub-groups shed light on large groups, because most times they are disputatious, and therefore essential and enlightening for the behaviour and the institutions of the ruling power.